

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY ATHENS

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 256586

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT BELGRADE 6776 ACTION SECSTATE OCT 15.

QUOTE: C O N F I D E N T I A L BELGRADE 6776

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DEPT PLEASE PASS ATHENS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PGOV GR US YO

SUBJ: YUGOSLAV DEFENSE MINISTER'S TALK WITH AVEROFF

REF: ATHENS 10978

1. WHILE WE DO NOT DISCOUNT THEIR PARANOIA, YUGOSLAVS HAVE LONG EXAGGERATED PRESSURES FROM BOTH EAST AND WEST AS TACTIC TO MAXIMIZE THEIR OWN FREEDOM OF MANEUVER -- TACTIC WHICH HAS PROVEN EMINENTLY SUCCESSFUL AS AVEROFF'S REACTION ONCE AGAIN DEMONSTRATES. LJUBICIC'S COMMENTS ARE OF A PIECE WITH NUMEROUS OTHERS WE HAVE HEARD IN RECENT MONTHS -- BERNARDIC AT DUBROVNIK, KARDELJ TO HARRIMAN, ET AL. THEY BOIL DOWN TO "EITHER YOU DO EVERYTHING WE ASK FROM YOU AND ACCEPT EVERYTHING WE DO TO YOU OR WE WILL END UP IN THE SOVIET CAMP."

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OBTAINING THIS IS A WHOLLY ARTIFICIAL EITHER/OR, A POLICY

OF KEEPING US FOCUSED ON MACRO-PRINCIPLES TO PREVENT OUR PUSHING THEM ON MICRO-ISSUES, E.G., IF WE ACCEPT THEIR NON-ALIGNMENT WE CANNOT CRITICIZE THEIR STANDS ON KOREA OR PUERTO RICO, IF WE ACCEPT THE STRATEGIC VALUE OF YUGOSLAVIA OUTSIDE THE WARSAW PACK WE CANNOT QUESTION THEM ABOUT GROWING SOVIET USE OF THEIR PORTS OR MAKE SONNENFELDT'S DEMAND THAT THEY BE LESS OBNOXIOUS TO THE U.S.

2. LJUBICIC'S SPECIFICS GIVE THE GAME AWAY. PRESIDENT FORD'S VISIT WAS IN AUGUST, 1975 WHILE PRESS PIECE IN QUESTION WAS "WASHINGTON POST" ARTICLE JANUARY 12, 1976-- HARDLY "WITHIN DAYS". STORY WAS PRECIPITATED BY CORRESPONDENT'S DISCUSSIONS WITH FSFA DIRECTOR FOR NORTH AMERICAN AFFAIRS STARCEVIC AND DR. ALEKSANDAR GRICKOV, INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SECRETARY OF LCY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND ARTICLE IN "NIN" BY THREE YUGOSLAV GENERALS WHO STRESSED TANK THREAT FROM PANONIAN PLAIN. LJUBICIC GAVE AVEROFF FIRST EXPLICIT ACKNOWLEDGEMENT THAT SOVIET UNHAPPINESS WAS FACTOR IN SUBSEQUENT DECISION PUT-OFF TOW PURCHASES (THEY BACK ON RECENT GOY SHOPPING LIST) BUT HE DID NOT CITE WHAT MAY WELL BE MORE SIGNIFICANT FACTOR--TITO'S NERVOUSNESS. DURING CODEL ALBERT'S TALKS WITH HIM LAST AUGUST, TITO DENIED THAT YUGOSLAVS HAD REQUESTED TOW. HE WAS EITHER KEPT IN DARK OF ACTUALLY OPPOSED--IN EITHER CASE LJUBICIC AND OTHERS SUPPORTING PURCHASE PROBABLY WERE IN HOT WATER WHEN "POST" ARTICLE APPEARED AND WERE FORCED TO RETREAT AND BLAME U.S. PRESS AND USG. OUR "TOLERATION" OF CROATIAN NATIONALISTS IS A SIMILAR ATTEMPT TO PASS THE BUCK FOR WHAT IS ESSENTIALLY A DOMESTIC YUGOSLAV PROBLEM. REVEALING THAT LJUBICIC IGNORED FACT TWA HIJACKERS ARE IN JAIL AND WILL SHORTLY GO ON TRIAL -- FOR REAL GOY GOAL IS NOT SUPPRESSION OF TERRORISM BUT OF ALL OPPOSITION GROUPS.

3. WHATEVER THEIR PROCLIVITY FOR HYPERBOLE, IN BRINGING PRESSURE ON USG WE HAVE LONG ARGUED THAT WE SHOULD SEPARATE MILITARY-TO-MILITARY COOPERATION FROM REMAINDER OF OUR RELATIONSHIP AND PROCEED AT AS RAPID A PACE AS THE YUGOSLAVS FEEL THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH SOVIET UNION WILL

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ALLOW. WHILE LJUBICIC FELT COMPELLED TO CANCEL STOP-OVER AND LUNCH WITH DEPUTY SECRETARY ELLSWORTH IN SEPTEMBER, BELIEVE NEXT FEW MONTHS MAY WELL PROVIDE MORE PROPITIOUS CLIMATE IN WHICH TO MOVE AHEAD. FACT BERNARDIC MADE SPECIAL POINT AT DUBROVNIK OF SAYING "MILITARY COOPERATION IN SOME ASPECTS CERTAINLY NTA TABOF" IS ONE SIGN. ASSIGNMENT OF MILITARY PROCUREMENT OFFICER TO YUGOSLAV EMBASSY WASHINGTON IS ANOTHER. AND MILITARY HERE HAVE APPEALED

FOR MORE INVITATIONS FOR MILITARY VISITS AS DID BELOVSKI
WITH ASST. SECY. HARTMAN OCT 12.

4. WE ARE REVIEWING OVERALL STTE OF PLAY WITH LATEST
SHOPPING LIST, SHIP AND HIGH-LEVEL VISITS AND WILL SHORTLY
SEND CABLE RECOMMENDING AREAS WHERE WE BELIEVE FASTER
MOVEMENT DESIRABLE AND POSSIBLE. SILBERMAN
UNQUOTE HABIB

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